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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000036

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TAGS: [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NEW BASRAH ISF COMMANDER ON OPERATIONS AND IP REFORM

REF: A. BASRAH 21
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1151
[1](#)C. BASRAH 32
[1](#)D. BAGHDAD 969
[1](#)E. BASRAH 26
[1](#)F. 07 BASRAH 91
[1](#)G. BASRAH 03

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CLASSIFIED BY: Howell H. Howard, Director, U.S. Regional Embassy Office, Basrah, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C//REL MCFI) Summary: During an April 16 meeting with the Regional Embassy Office, MG Mohammed Jawad Hawadi, the newly appointed Basrah Operations Commander, admitted that the ISF initially performed poorly against the militias. Thanks to U.S. support and recent operational successes clearing some neighborhoods, the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) appeared to be weakening. With this newfound confidence, the Iraqi Security Forces plan to take on JAM's stronghold in Hyyaniyah on April 19 to "strike at the heart of the militia." Recognizing the enormity of the challenges he faces, he suggested imposing martial law. He also criticized the Iraqi Police, intends to eviscerate it, and deny it a paramilitary role. End Summary.

OPERATION CHARGE OF THE KNIGHTS

[1](#)2. (C//REL MCFI) MG Mohammed Jawad Hawadi, the recently appointed Basrah Operations Commander (BOC), met Regional Embassy Officers (REO) April 16 to discuss Basrah's security and his vision for the future. Mohammed admitted that the ISF performed poorly during Maliki's late March Operation "Charge of the Knights" (CoK) to eliminate militia influences from Basrah (refs A-D). He attributed the ISF's failure in the opening days of the offensive to Maliki's haste to begin without preparing the troops, Mohan's lack of operational planning, and the weakness of the Iraqi Police (IP). As a result, the ISF suffered heavy losses and was demoralized.

[1](#)3. (C//REL MCFI) Mohammed praised U.S. Military Transition Teams embedded with IA units and U.S. airpower for snatching victory from the jaws of defeat (ref E). Iraqi soldiers were gaining confidence knowing U.S. aircraft supported them and as a result of successfully conducting operations in Qibla, Timinyah, Maqil, and Jubaylah. JAM, however, was disappearing, seriously demoralized, and losing the capacity to fight. He estimated there were more than 10,000 JAM members in Basrah, but not all of them were fighters. Current clashes with the ISF were

ambushes involving groups of 5-6 fighters with small to medium arms, though they were effectively employing IED screens.

¶4. (C//REL MCFI) Looking at future operations, Mohammed told us that he preferred to tackle Gurnah to the North of Basrah to pursue fleeing JAM leaders reportedly hiding there and to block weapons from being smuggled from Maysan. Instead, GOI leaders decided to "strike a decisive blow to the heart of the militia and win a psychological victory" by clearing the JAM stronghold of Hyyaniyah. (Note: We later confirmed this operation is planned to commence April 19. End Note.) Once the city is secure, the ISF will clear outwards. He recognized the need to hold ground once taken and supported employment programs to undercut militia recruitment. But, he called MND-SE's recommendation to provide humanitarian assistance "naove" and said, "JAM needed to be pressured, not fed."

NOW THAT I'M IN CHARGE...

¶5. (C//REL MCFI) Mohammed, inheriting the same problems that got his predecessor (MG Mohan Hafith Fahad al-Fariji) fired (ref A), told us that he reminded his superiors of the challenges that lay ahead: the ISF is weak, the borders unsecured, neighboring countries negatively intervened, and the political parties would continue trying to infiltrate the ISF. Mohammed claimed to have no relations with the political parties and did not hesitate to call the Provincial Council and Governor corrupt. At our behest, however, he agreed to improve those relationships (soured by his predecessor) by occasionally engaging them (ref F). He also suggested that Basrah needed a two-year period of martial law to impose GOI control over a "complex social structure."

¶6. (C//REL MCFI) Mohammed also laid out his vision of what should be done with the IP - eviscerate it so it could do no harm and limit its role to civil policing rather than paramilitary tasks. He said that he has already spoken with soon-to-be IP Chief, MG Adil Kamal Daham, and instructed him how

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to reorganize the police; Mohammed said he would give Adil a free hand for three months to sort out the IP. Corrupt officers will be sent to outlying areas (leaving the IA to fight unencumbered), retrain the remaining officers, and then post small numbers of them at stations. Mohammed envisioned bringing in IP forces from outside of Basrah and rotating them periodically to avoid further infiltration by the militias. He criticized HMG's police training and requested U.S. assistance instead.

COMMENT

¶7. (C//REL MCFI) It is difficult to assess Mohammed this early into his tenure, but there are already mixed reviews. He presents himself as a soldier first, a nationalist, above politics, and friendly to the U.S. Personally, he appears friendly, quiet, unassuming, and in a stark contrast to Mohan - humility and an eagerness to please. We believe he could be positively influenced to support Coalition objectives. However, Mohammed has been criticized by some for failing to organize and decisively move his division against the Jund al-Sama'a uprising in January, which forced IP Chief MG Jalil Khalaf Shuwayl to take charge (ref G).

¶8. (C//REL MCFI) According to MND-SE, Mohammad has shown an interest in training, particularly urban warfare training. MND-SE trainers have also observed some of Mohammed's speeches to his troops emphasizing devotion to Iraq over parties and tribes and urging them to protect Basrawis rather than steal from them. One Iraqi officer told MND-SE officers privately that MG Mohammed genuinely cares for his soldiers and has their respect.

HHOWARD